

Testimony of Chief George Basar
Representing Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,

My name is George Basar. I am currently the Police Chief for the City of Howell and Legislative Chairman for the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police. It is in that capacity that I am testifying before you today.

In the way of background on myself I would like the committee to know that I have been a Police Chief for over 12 years. During the course of my career, with my former department I served as Secretary, Vice-President and President of the local Police Officers Union which was represented by the POAM. I also served on the Executive Board of the POAM as well as the Board or Directors of the MACP and I am a past President of the MACP.

As result, I have been intimately involved with PA 312 from both sides of the bargaining table, both on the union side and on the management side. I have been a party to favorable and appropriate rulings. I have also been a party to unfavorable, inappropriate and just plain bizarre rulings. Once again, on both sides of the bargaining table.

The Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police has not yet taken a formal position on HB 4205. However, the MACP is previously on record, has advocated for, and is in full support of the need to make meaningful reforms to PA 312. That still remains the position the MACP today.

Now, the question is; does the full repeal of PA 312 as called for in HB 4205, represent meaningful reform or for that matter reform at all? I don't know.

What I do know is that this bill appears to be moving very quickly through the legislative process. From our perspective, it appears that if this bill passes, that very little consideration has been given to the all important question of "What then?"

Are we granting Police Officers and Fire Fighters in Michigan the right to strike, as they do in the private sector? Are we going to make Michigan a "right to work" state? Are we moving down the path of following the Wisconsin model? Again, I don't know.

What I do know and what I have learned over the course of my career and my experiences, is that when decisions and actions are made in haste, or in anger, or out of frustration, then more times than not, they are proven to be the wrong decisions and result in a myriad of unintended and unthought-of consequences.

While a lot of the rhetoric and the impetus behind this bill seem to be directed toward the "interest arbitration" provisions of PA312, those provisions that deal with issues of wages and

benefits, it should not be forgotten that PA312 is larger than that. PA 312 also deals with issues of discipline and grievance arbitration. This is an area of PA 312 that I would argue is also in need of some serious attention and again meaningful reform. This aspect of PA 312 and its shortcomings seems to have been lost in the discussion and in the desire to move quickly..

It would appear today that we stand at a crossroads. One that should allow us to pause, take a step back and to make sure that we are not missing an opportunity.

This may be an opportunity to bring the various stakeholders together and to brainstorm around a package of reforms that all sides can live with. Not necessarily reforms that everyone likes, but reforms that everyone can live with. After all, who better understands the pros and cons, the strengths and the weaknesses of PA 312 better than those who live with it, and work with it, on a regular basis?

I am not suggesting that this will be an easy task or one that would be accomplished quickly, but if it achieves the desired result with the input of the affected stakeholders, and produces a better result, isn't worth the wait?

At the end of the day the Legislature still holds the ultimate trump card. It can simply pass HB4205.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time and the opportunity today to testify before you and the committee.